In *Stripped and Script: Loyalist Women Writers of the American Revolution*, Kacy Dowd Tillman examines the literary spaces that allowed women to construct and interrogate their identities—and loyalties—during and after the Revolutionary War. Focusing primarily on the “letter-journal” and other manuscript genres of life writing, Tillman, professor of English at the University of Tampa, sheds new light on both well- and lesser-known pieces of revolutionary-era writing. *Stripped and Script* highlights the important role played by epistolary spaces in a “period when such intimate spaces could be violated by interception, publication, and censorship” (p. 1). As Tillman convincingly demonstrates, loyalist women’s writing frequently emphasized the violation they experienced during the war; “loyalist women discursively returned time and again to the image of being stripped,” she argues, the implications of which “highlight their inability to consent, neither to the people who entered their homes nor to the loyalties they or their families were assumed to hold” (p. 3). *Stripped and Script* thus provides a nuanced analysis of the complex intersections of political identity and women’s legal status under coverture, revealing a “myriad of possibilities for the ways in which early Americans interpreted patriotism, loyalty, treason, citizenship, nationalism, and rebellion” (p. 165).

*Stripped and Script* draws on several important bodies of literature in its analysis. Tillman’s work builds on recent dynamic scholarship on the history of loyalism in the revolution—including monographs by Rebecca Brannon, Ruma Chopra, Maya Jasanoff, Judith Van Buskirk, and others—to complicate the political identities and perspectives of those considered to be in defiance of patriotic ideals, moving beyond a narrative of victimization and rethinking the military implications of the home front. Its emphasis on female authorship and self-fashioning contributes to a shift away from “essays, pamphlets, and broadsides traditionally published by men” and toward women’s intimate and epistolary writing (p. 21). Tillman’s decision to focus on the letter-journal and other manuscript forms is a critical one, as it enables her to
center women's political engagement in a space outside of traditional definitions of the public sphere; and as she notes, those literary spaces reveal how loyalist women across the spectrum "shaped and manipulated their publicity and privacy, and how they circulated the only bodies over which they possessed any semblance of control: their paper bodies" (p. 5).

The chapter organization in Stripped and Script reinforces its emphasis on loyalist perspectives along a spectrum. Chapters are arranged thematically around differing allegiances, anchored to the specific experiences and intimate life writing of the women in her study who illustrate each given perspective. Early chapters address the gradations of those often categorized as loyalists, like Grace Growden Galloway, but who in practice occupied a blurrier space along the continuum. In each instance, chapters grapple with the central role played by manuscript writing and letter-journals as a space in which to self-fashion political identities separately from others around them. For instance, chapter 1, “Scripting Disaffection,” focuses on Galloway as an example of those either disaffected or neutral but treated as loyalists. Tillman argues that this “suggests that women who sought to distinguish their loyalties from their families used manuscript writing to do so” (p. 21). In chapter 2, “Scripting Pacifism,” Quaker women like Elizabeth Drinker and Sarah Logan Fisher represent those who “created a localized identity that refused allegiance to anyone outside of their faith,” deploying intimate writing “to create a counter-rhetoric defying Congress's insistence that Friends should be categorized as traitors and spies” (p. 50). Chapter 3 likewise addresses a Quaker woman, Margaret Hill Morris, but instead grapples with her resistance to categorization as an example of neutrality. In each of these instances, Tillman’s beautiful prose sketches out biographical details of these key figures, while clear subheadings and carefully structured callbacks serve to organize and draw thematic connections.

The remaining chapters continue to move away from a focus on the emasculating effect of loyalist treason to an emphasis on the discursive role played by loyalist women’s “paper bodies” in shaping agency, identities, and experiences during and after the revolution. In chapter 4, Tillman focuses on Rebecca Shoemaker and daughter Anna Rawle as examples of those she terms “active loyalists,” exploring the complicated ways loyalist women “operated after the revised treason acts obliged them to adapt their epistolary performances to evade detection” (p. 96). Chapter 5, “Scripting Patriotism,” pivots to the strategic maneuvering of Elizabeth Graeme Ferguson. Through analyzing her print culture as “a matrix of genres,” including Ferguson’s letter-poem “Il Penseroso,” Tillman argues that Ferguson actively distanced herself from traitorous accusations and the threat of confiscation through her publicity campaign, rebranding as a “patriotic abandoned wife” (p. 123). The afterword, “Scripting Ellipses,” builds on themes of historical revision and memory by pointing to the process of erasure that occurred after the war. Tillman uses the work of historian and antiquarian Deborah Norris Logan to illustrate this process; as Tillman posits of Logan, “Since that narrative possessed no room for dissent, she rewrote her family's legacy away from loyalists and pacifists to align with the rebels, utilizing the ellipses in her journal to record for posterity this significant shift” (p. 164). Tillman adeptly weaves the stakes of dissent into each of her chapters, emphasizing the possible consequences: loss of property and financial stability, isolation, violence, or even death.

Stripped and Script provides a clear and well-written analysis of loyalist women’s intimate manuscript writing and its larger implications. Its tantalizing details inspire readers to seek out additional examples of women’s engagement with letter-journals and other forms of singular and collective life writing and push one to ponder how similar themes might play out in the bloody zones of the southern theater of the revolution. As Till-
man reveals, “A new genre was born out of ingenuity and desperation that represents the frustrations and determinations of a disenfranchised group of people who refused to accept the narrow definitions of loyalty that were imposed on them” (p. 114). Ultimately, Tillman’s work reveals how women’s individual experiences shaped their adaptation of the genre of correspondence to their own ends as they worked, as historical actors, to process and craft their unique allegiances.

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